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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

Note verbale dated 10 September 1996 from the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Sudan to the United Nations in New York presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to enclose the text of a declaration by the Advisory Council on Human Rights in the Sudan on allegations of practices of slavery in the Sudan (see annex). The Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Sudan would like the present letter and attached statement to be circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 112 (c) of the provisional agenda.

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ANNEX

[Original: Arabic]

Declaration by the Advisory Council on Human Rights in the Sudan on allegations of practices of slavery in the Sudan

The Council, unequivocally committed as it is to the preservation of human rights in the Sudan and as the advisory body to the State in this area, has followed up, with deep concern, all accusations relating to practices of slavery in the Sudan.

The Council wishes, through the present declaration, to inform local and world opinion of its position with respect to these accusations. That position may be summed up as follows:

1. The Council acknowledges the validity of the position of the Government of the Sudan in its unswerving commitment to the eradication of slavery and similar practices, in accordance with the various international instruments to which the Sudan is a party.

2. The clear condemnation by the Government of the Sudan of these practices in all their forms wherever they may occur, and its commitment to eradicating them wherever they are found, demonstrates the seriousness of the Government's intent to abide by its international commitments. In this connection, the Council notes that it has communicated repeatedly with the various governmental bodies concerned with this issue, and that those bodies have declared themselves to be fully prepared to take whatever action may be necessary wherever such practices occur, including the appointment of special prosecutors.

3. The Council's primary concern at present is to further by every available means the work of the commission of inquiry established by the Sudan in response to the resolution on this question adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1995. The Council endorses the recommendation of the working group which made preliminary investigations in tribal contact areas that these investigations should be intensified as soon as normal circumstances permit. For this reason, the Council considers that to raise the issue before the commission of inquiry has completed its task is clearly tantamount to exploiting human rights issues for political ends. This is contrary to international instruments dealing with human rights, especially since the open-door policy that the Government of the Sudan has adopted in the area of human rights will enable the international community, through its representatives in the Sudan who will monitor the progress made to date, to further the achievement of our shared objectives.

4. The irrefutable facts that the Committee on Forced Disappearances has been able to establish in the course of the past week, supported by audio-visual evidence, including interviews with dozens of persons in the Nuba Mountains districts who were alleged to have disappeared as a result of the use of force, give the Council sufficient reason to urge the international community to be cautious in reacting to accusations relating to slavery and in accepting the

credibility of persons and organizations making such accusations, in order to avoid presenting such persons and organizations with opportunities of exploiting human rights issues for political ends.

5. The Council expresses its dismay and indignation at the action of certain persons and organizations in persistently levelling baseless accusations against the Sudan and using the world media to publicize those accusations as widely as possible while resolutions concerning the Sudan are being debated in international forums. The Council urges the international community to put a stop to these practices, which have adversely affected the sincere efforts being made by many international organizations which are addressing the issue of human rights objectively.

In conclusion, the Council reiterates that the persistent attempts of certain persons and organizations to exploit human rights issues for political ends is currently the greatest obstacle to progress in ensuring respect for human rights in the Sudan, inasmuch as the State has had to expend much time and substantial resources on the task of refuting these accusations, time and resources that could otherwise have been used to further the Sudan's numerous initiatives aimed at preserving and maintaining human rights, monitoring their effective enjoyment in practice, and disseminating awareness of them.